



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**UNITED WAY TO HOST MONTHLY COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS AIMED AT
DEEPENING INDIVIDUALS' UNDERSTANDING OF RACIAL INEQUITY AND RACISM**

Be brave enough to have conversations that matter.

Kankakee, Ill. - In tandem with the United Way of Illinois' '21 Week Equity Challenge,' the local United Way chapter will host monthly Community Conversations. The first Community Conversation, "Racial Identity – THEN & NOW" will be held online via ZOOM on Wednesday, March 3, 2021, from 9:00 AM-10:30 AM. This event is free to all community members; individuals who have not signed up for the Equity Challenge are still encouraged to participate. Individuals can register online [here](#).

"Community Conversations are an excellent opportunity to learn -- personally and professionally," shares Rhonda Currie, Community Organizer for Illinois Coalition for Community Services. "It is hopeful to see necessary conversations forming, in order to equip our communities to engage meaningfully in the work of racial understanding and healing."

Reverend Robert Bushey Jr. of Central Christian Church and Shannon Swilley, Dean of Students for Kankakee School District 111, recently produced the "Stony Road" podcast featuring topics and themes on inequity and racism, and will be referred to throughout United Way's Community Conversations. Individuals who are interested in listening to 'Stony Road's' first episode, *Racial Identity – THEN & NOW* should email stonyroad@CCCBourbonnais.com to receive a link.

United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties' Community Conversations encourages individuals, families, friends, and co-workers to join the monthly events which will focus on discussing racial equity conversations to gain a deeper understanding of the weekly content within the Equity Challenge. Content includes additional information and resources on how systemic racism and inequality play a significant role, as well as have an impact on our communities. Future event dates are to be determined.



United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties is proud to join United Way of Illinois and 43 other local United Ways across the state to embark on the 21 Week Equity Challenge. United Way staff and leadership will participate, as well as corporate partners, volunteers, and donors.

“Building an equitable community requires time, commitment, and patience from all residents,” shares Fiana Comer, United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties’ Community Impact Manager. “My hope is that during this challenge more people in our community will develop an understanding of their role in creating an equitable environment. When the 21-weeks are completed, I hope to see change in motion and tangible positive results.”

For more details, individuals can reach out to Fiana Comer, United Way’s Community Impact Manager at fiana@myunitedway.org.

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About the Equity Challenge

From Martin Luther King Jr. Day (1/18) to Juneteenth (6/19), participants will complete weekly learning assignments about equity, racism, bias and more. The 15-minute assignments include readings, videos, and questions for participants to consider. Upon completion, they’ll receive a digital certificate and tips and tools to help continue the conversation in their local community.

The 21 Week Equity Challenge is supported by Healing Illinois, the State of Illinois, The Chicago Community Trust and United Way of Illinois. The weekly curriculum was designed by United Way of Champaign, using evolving content originally created by United Way of Washtenaw County in Michigan. New challenge content will be released on a weekly basis.

About United Way of Illinois

United Way of Illinois is an association of local United Ways representing communities across Illinois. We advance the common good through public policy. We monitor the activity of government, review legislation, and educate the general public and our public officials related to their impact on human services and our local communities. To learn more, visit unitedwayillinois.org.

About United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties

For 80 years, United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties has mobilized caring people to invest in communities where resources are needed most. United Way brings direct service providers, the business and philanthropic communities, and local institutions together to tackle some of the biggest issues affecting our region. United Way is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, governed by a local volunteer board of directors. For more information, visit myunitedway.org.